

## **Turkish Foreign Policy In A Multipolar World Setting**

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Turkey's multi-dimensional, indeed, all azimuth foreign policy exercises of late have given rise to endless speculations and contradictions across the world and in particular in the West. It epitomizes the Turkish President's meetings with his Russian, Ukrainian and Iranian counterparts as well as his meetings with his Western partners, including Biden. Indeed, since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict Ankara has been pursuing a noticeably restraint, well-balanced equidistance policy towards the protagonists without taking part in the western sanctions but at the same time keeping up its relations with its western partners closely. Having rid itself of almost all its Middle-Eastern entanglements, which have cost the country an arm and a leg over the last decade or so, Turkey now stands to benefit from the opportunities accruing from a multipolar world order, something it has become an unstoppable reality, however much the US and the Collective West are still trying to prevent it, but to no avail.

Since the guns began firing in Ukraine we have been witnessing battles and struggles across the word: indeed, we have an actual ongoing battle between Russia and Ukraine mostly on the latter's soil with the former having the upper hand. Whether this war would spread out of Ukraine engulfing others or whether it would cause a nuclear disaster over one of the parties' reckless action remain to be seen because it looks as though the US and the UK, ardent supporters and suppliers of Kiev, are adamant to ensure that the war goes on for as long Kiev can carry on fighting against Moscow, as the critiques of the West say, to the last Ukrainian. It is, therefore, quite difficult, if not impossible, to make substantial forecast on the duration of the conflict, just as it is not easy whether or not the contested nuclear reactor in Zaporizhnaja could cause a calamity, the proportions of which would go beyond anything we can think of today.

Since the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine there has also been a fierce battle fought on the media and social media. At the onset of the war it looked as if the West was winning the media war overwhelmingly, but gradually there has established some degree of equilibrium on the news outlets as Chinese, Russian and other agencies seem to respond to the West's narrative over what is going on in Ukraine with their own. Indeed, the US strategists long debated whether the US was actually losing out its absolute edge on the information front over the decades. Just as a comparison would reveal the degree to which the US' preponderance over the sources of information at the time of the First Gulf War of 1991, or even the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 there has been a discernable challenge to the US monopoly on that front with English language Chinese,

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Russian, Iranian and other outlets presenting an alternative view of the conflict and in particular displaying the US and its allies as ugly hegemon and its stooges trying to keep their unipolar world order at the expense of all other nations.

The armed conflict in Ukraine has certainly unleashed forces that have been endeavoring to turn the world into multipolarity while the US with its allies in Europe and Asia-Pacific try to keep the unipolar world order under Washington's control. The struggle for multipolarity has certainly a long history with Russia under Putin challenging the US-dominated world order and craving for multipolarity for at least a decade and a half, and with China outperforming the US and the West in general scoring dazzling economic growth year after year and at the same time defying US policies across the Global South. And it was obvious that the US preponderance over all areas and throughout the world would come to an end at some stage but no-one was absolutely sure how fast the evolution into a multipolar world would occur. It seems that as Russia opened the stage, after months long diplomatic and military escalation, by initiating what it called the Special Military Operation the struggle for and against multipolarity has hastened. Today we can safely conclude that multipolarity has indeed dawned on.

It is safe to say that we will have a multipolar world order in the decades ahead. From a historical perspective, it is also safe to say that multipolarity was always the prevailing world order until after the Second World War, when the world or at least a considerable part of it, rallied around two rival camps opposed each other not only in terms of balance of power and influence but also on ideological grounds. And the ensuing unipolarity that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union, ending the bipolar world was definitely an exception to the rule: there has hardly been a unipolar world order with one great power dictating its terms over almost all the others the world over.

One of the striking features of present multipolarity is likely to be that it will not be limited to Europe and/or the West. A cursory look at the last several centuries from a strategic perspective and on the basis of balance of power would demonstrate that there was rivalry or competition among the great powers for mastery both in Europe and across the world. From the predominance of the Iberian powers to the emergence of France as the strongest state in Europe as well as in the world to the advent of England into the great power competition through to the making of unified Italy and Germany as well the emergence of a strong Russia all the powers involved were one way or the other European or as in the case of Japan, and the USA, they were part of the European state system. For the first time we are now seeing a multipolar world not necessarily limited to Europe and the West in general because the mere fact is that China's rise in all respects, from industry to technology through to military and etc. makes a huge difference.

It is quite likely that in the present multipolar world system there are going to be some super powers like the US, still the most powerful country in the world, or China but also

like Russia particularly in military terms and even in the field of economy as it has manifested its resilience since the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine in the face of enormous sanctions. There are also others who could be regarded as super powers like India and Brazil whose potential is immense.

In the newly changing circumstances, there is also going to be a number of middle powers like Turkey, Iran, and depending on whether or not the EU will survive the strong pressures from multipolarity major states like France, Germany, Italy, and outside the EU Britain, will all fall within that category. Turkey is likely to play a major role as an interregional power capable of projecting power in more than one region, all critically important given the balance of power struggle in Eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Middle East and the Caucasus. In this new world setting Turkey will probably display a very sui generis foreign policy because although it is a member of NATO with the second largest armed forces with enormous battle-experience within the Alliance, it has developed over the years special ties to Moscow, which now include cooperation and consultation over regional politics and defense industry in addition to flourishing economic and trade relations. Hence, it has not adopted Western sanctions against Russia, if anything, it has kept up its relations with Moscow gaining the latter's confidence. And with this policy options Ankara has become the main player in world diplomacy as a facilitator between Moscow and Kiev, even brokering the Grain Agreement by which Ukraine has been exporting its wheat and other cereals to the world.

Ankara's approach to West's rivals like Iran is also fundamentally different in that Ankara and Teheran, though not seeing eye to eye on all matters of importance to them, have been cooperating partners in addition to their potentially growing economic and trading relations. The Astana Platform, which Turkey set up together with Russia and Iran, is just one case in point where the two capitals have been working together despite occasional differences over Syria. Ankara has fallen upon its traditional premise in its relations with Israel, mending its broken ties to Tel Aviv over the last year, and the two countries seem to be upgrading their relations with the objective of creating a serious rapprochement as it always existed between the two over the last decades, indeed since the inception of Israel.

All in all, one can conclude that Turkey will pursue an all azimuth foreign policy in the newly evolving multipolar world, and having rid itself of all its Middle Eastern entanglements Ankara is now poised to benefit from it quite substantially